

N10 004-74

SOVIET MEDIA TREATMENT OF THE UNITED STATES

In the wake of the Middle East crisis, there has been no appreciable change in the Soviet media's generally favorable treatment accorded the United States since the movement toward detente became the dominant feature of Soviet foreign policy. While the US worldwide alert during the Middle East conflict in October prompted some sharp recriminations, Moscow attributed the successful containment of the crisis to US-Soviet collaboration. Moscow has continued to emphasize that a new era has begun in its relations with the United States, and the media have maintained the relatively circumspect treatment of President Nixon that has been the norm in recent years. While specific statements or actions of the President are occasionally viewed negatively, Moscow uses none of the epithets that were common during his tenure as vice president, and he is pictured as sharing the Soviet aim of preserving world peace and settling disputes through negotiations.

This stance has not meant a cessation of critical comment on "aggressive imperialism"; Soviet leaders and propagandists make clear that detente does not and will not extend to ideological accommodation. The media continue to assail various elements and conditions in the United States and the rest of the western world and can be expected to do so in the future. No doubt with an eye to its standing in the "socialist" world, Moscow persists in its criticism of the failings of capitalist economies, economic injustices among social groups, and racial discrimination in the West. While the President is frequently credited with farsightedness and realism, Moscow maintains its fire at such political leaders as Senator Jackson and what it calls "hard-core cold warriors," as well as representatives of "the military-industrial complex," Zionists, and "reactionary" labor leaders.

It is useful to look at Soviet media treatment of the United States in both strategic and tactical terms. Thus, there is no contradiction between Moscow's criticism of specific US stands or actions on arms control and trade and the professed Soviet belief that the Administration shares the Soviet goals of arms control measures and expansion of economic cooperation. Moscow propaganda must be taken as a whole with an awareness that it has many different objectives and is aimed at varied audiences, at home as well as abroad. The significance of the content and format can be assessed only with careful attention to the objective situation and against the perspective of past media performance in similar situations.

Moscow behavior following the US alert is instructive in this regard. The fact that the first explicit Soviet acknowledgment of the alert came in a TASS statement could be properly assessed only against the

knowledge that this is the least authoritative vehicle for official comment, i.e. the one that commits Moscow the least. In descending order of authoritativeness, Moscow might react officially with a statement issued jointly by the Soviet government and the party, by the government, the foreign ministry, a spokesman for the foreign ministry, or an "authorized" TASS statement, as in this case. The outbreak of hostilities had prompted a Soviet "government" statement on 7 October, and another "government" statement on the 23d charged Israel with violations of the cease-fire.

It must be assumed that there are differences of opinion in the Soviet Union regarding the policy of detente and its implementation. Predictably, concern to maintain military strength is more likely to find expression in the pages of the army paper Red Star rather than in the party organ Pravda or the government daily Izvestiya. In recent months articles in Red Star have argued that greater military strength would improve the opportunities for detente.

Much of Soviet media content is reactive, with the news agency TASS providing reportage of major US pronouncements and actions, albeit selective reporting to suit Moscow's tactical purposes. Just as in the case of official statements, the level of authoritativeness of comment must be taken into account. A TASS dispatch quoting foreign sources is less significant than an original commentary by a major TASS writer. An anonymous radio talk is not as important as Moscow's weekly radio roundtable, in which such commentators as Pravda's Mayevskiy or Izvestiya's Matveyev participate. Further up in the scale of authoritativeness are press and journal articles by political commentator Yuriy Zhukov or USA Institute head Georgiy Arbatov, as well as major editorials and editorial articles in Pravda. Of course, most significant are statements by Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

DATE: 3 Jan 74

TO: Mr. Colby

FROM: Mr. Whitman

Executive Registry
74-065

SUBJECT:

REMARKS:

Last month, having heard once again from General Keegan on the iniquities of the USSR as manifest in its press, you asked for a short memo on Soviet media. The attached response was written by a senior FBIS researcher. If you have further questions, please let me know.

*Thank you
a fine memo, which
makes much sense*

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